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*President* : Mr. Foss SHANAHAN (New Zealand).

*Present* :

Representatives of the following States: Afghanistan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Observers for the following Member States: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Hungary, Israel, Netherlands, Romania, Yugoslavia.

Observers for the following non-member States: Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland.

Representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, World Health Organization.

AGENDA ITEM 20

**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/3506 and Corr.1 and Add.1)**

1. Mr. SCHNYDER, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, introducing his annual report (E/3506 and Corr.1 and Add.1), said that the period to which the report related had been marked by World Refugee Year — the success of which was due perhaps even more to the peoples than to the governments that had taken part — and by the growing interest which the international community was taking in refugee problems, the tendency being to view them no longer from a strictly legal point of view but from a humanitarian, economic and social angle.

2. In regard to the refugees coming within the High Commissioner's purview, the effects of World Refugee Year had been felt in the three main sectors of the work of his Office. As to international protection, World Refugee Year had promoted an improvement in the status accorded to refugees in the various countries of reception. In Europe alone, about 15,000 refugees had been naturalized in 1960. In addition, measures had been taken to strengthen the economic and social situation of the refugees in the countries in which they were living, and thus to pave the way for and ease their assimilation. Thirdly, the section in charge of the indemnification fund for refugees persecuted on account of their nationality under the national-socialist régime in Germany had received 5,500 applications up to 21 July 1961; those applications were still under

consideration, except for fifty on which a favourable decision had already been taken.

3. In the sphere of assistance, the effects of World Refugee Year had been even more spectacular. The exceptional target of \$12 million had been virtually attained, so that funds were available to cover the camp clearance programme.

4. Lastly, the most tangible expression of the wave of enthusiasm produced by World Refugee Year had occurred in the sphere of emigration and resettlement. The principal countries of immigration had opened their doors progressively wider to categories of refugees previously ineligible for admission, such as handicapped refugees.

5. World Refugee Year had, however, not been able to solve all the problems. Of the 65,000 non-settled refugees living outside camps in Europe, 20,000 needed international help to facilitate their settlement and integration in the host countries. The greater part of the 1961 programme (\$6 million) was devoted to them. Although contributions received or pledged amounted as yet to only \$3 million, he hoped that the necessary funds would be forthcoming eventually. The final settlement of the problem of the old European refugees and the completion of the extensive programmes designed to assist them were essential. That was the purpose of the plan which he proposed to submit to the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its session in the spring of 1962.

6. The problem of European refugees in the Far East appeared in a somewhat different light. The real need was to resettle those refugees as and when they arrived in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Government had recently decided to admit to its territory all refugees wishing to emigrate, whether or not they had visas for the country of final destination. There were at the moment just under 6,000 of such refugees, of whom nearly 5,000 had been promised visas. The funds allocated for them in the 1961 and 1962 budgets were in principle sufficient to cover the total cost of their stay in Hong Kong and their subsequent resettlement. However, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration would require a further \$1.3 million to cover their transport costs.

7. Another task entrusted to the High Commissioner's Office was to support public and private action to assist the voluntary repatriation of refugees. A number of projects had been set on foot to cover the travelling expenses of the refugees concerned, and the funds allocated for that purpose during the current year were enabling him to continue that work.

8. Lastly, his Office, in close co-operation with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, had undertaken

a major relief operation for Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco. Those two countries, generous though their contribution had been, had been unable to defray the whole cost of the operation themselves. During World Refugee Year, it had been possible to cover the needs of the Algerian refugees fully, but for 1961 a large deficit on the \$7 million allocated for that purpose had still to be met. He hoped that the urgent appeal which he had sent to the States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies would bring a response.

9. He trusted that the situation of refugees resettled through patient effort would not be jeopardized by economic or other difficulties, and that the governments which had concluded certain regional economic and social agreements among themselves would give the refugees the benefit of such agreements.

10. New refugees were arriving in the countries in which his Office had so far had to operate. To prevent the occurrence of a fresh refugee problem, a continuous effort of solidarity was required, including the maintenance of a liberal policy by countries of immigration and the provision of international financial support in cases where the particular situation of the refugee and of the receiving country justified such aid.

11. He recalled General Assembly resolutions 1388 (XIV) and 1499 (XV), which authorized him to use his good offices in matters of assistance to refugees not coming within the direct competence of the United Nations. In pursuance of those resolutions, various governments had consulted him on refugee problems and asked for his help. In his view, it was essential to define the conditions and procedure for his intervention so that he might render the services which the international community expected of him. The General Assembly had certainly intended to issue a reminder that the universal character of the problem should not be lost sight of, and to affirm the exclusively humanitarian and social character of the task entrusted to his Office by severing it from all political association and by avoiding any link with legal definitions which might arouse controversy. He assured the Council that in the exercise of his functions he would act with due care and with a sense of reality.

12. Lastly, he recalled his Office's relations with the governments of the countries of residence, which played a decisive part in the problem, with the specialized agencies which had given substantial support, and with the voluntary agencies, whose contribution was essential because they were in daily contact with the refugees.

13. Mr. TOFFOLO (Italy) said that World Refugee Year had been a complete success. One of its great merits had been to give prominence to the existence of a serious human problem of which most people had been unaware.

14. He recalled some of the more specifically Italian aspects of the refugee problem. Italy, as a country of first asylum, was assuming great responsibilities. The hospitality and assistance it provided for the refugees represented a very heavy charge on the regular State budget. In 1960, 4,849 persons had been admitted, to be followed by a further 1,078 during the first four months of 1961. In addition, on 31 March 1961, 4,405 refugees had been living in Italy outside camps. In receiving those refugees,

Italy acted in accordance with the principles of international solidarity, and also with an article of its Constitution under which it was bound to receive persons applying for the right of asylum in its territory.

15. Once in Italy, the refugees had two choices: to become integrated in the Italian economy or to emigrate. The first course involved many difficulties, because despite recent favourable employment trends, there was still an ample supply of unskilled labour in the country. The second therefore seemed more promising. His delegation recognized the difficult task confronting immigration countries which had already received so many refugees, but would urge those countries to continue their efforts, and in particular to admit the largest possible number of "difficult cases". Just as Italy made no personal distinction in granting the right of asylum, immigration countries should avoid discrimination as far as possible. Italy was convinced that the work of the High Commissioner's Office would continue to yield excellent results, particularly if it met with understanding and support in an increasing number of countries.

16. Mr. DUPRAZ (France) recalled that his country was traditionally a land of asylum for refugees and that it had always shown the greatest interest in their situation. Consequently it was thought in France that the most important of the tasks of the High Commissioner's Office was to ensure that the receiving country should provide a stable legal status for refugees, since without that, resettlement would be illusory and refugees would try either to emigrate or to return home. Legal protection of that kind was the essential purpose of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which France had long since ratified, and was the only way to eliminate the characteristic refugee complex.

17. The report of the High Commissioner referred to special measures which had been taken, in particular at the European level. An agreement which had been concluded two years previously within the framework of the European Economic Community had given certain facilities to wage-earning refugees. Those who left the host country to find more remunerative work in another country of the Community had the assurance that if they failed they would be reinstated in their old jobs. Similar measures were being considered for the liberal professions in the form of a European convention within the framework of the Council of Europe, in application of recommendation 253 of that Council's Consultative Assembly.

18. He was aware that what was most urgently needed was often material assistance. Happily, camp clearance could be considered almost completed, as the High Commissioner had the necessary funds at his disposal, thanks to World Refugee Year. It would thus be possible to increase assistance to refugees outside camps, as had been constantly requested by his country.

19. He noted with satisfaction the improvement which the High Commissioner had reported with respect to emigration: as a result of World Refugee Year, the countries of immigration in America and Australasia had found it possible to relax the requirements imposed on ordinary immigrants in favour of refugees, although not without certain domestic difficulties which made the action of

their governments all the more meritorious. The ICEM should also be congratulated on the material assistance which it had given to refugee emigration.

20. Since the success of World Refugee Year had appreciably reduced the acuteness of the problems connected with refugees coming within the High Commissioner's purview, it had been suggested in some quarters that the funds thus released should be devoted to the work of the High Commissioner's Office under the heading of "good offices". His delegation could not but approve that suggestion. That work undeniably had the advantage over the normal procedure in that it was more flexible and was characterized by an empiricism detached from political passions; at the same time, it called for the greatest realism and the greatest prudence, qualities of which the High Commissioner had already given ample evidence.

21. Mrs. MURAVIEVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, after studying the report of the High Commissioner and the section on refugees in the *Report on the World Social Situation* (E/CN.5/346/Rev.1), her delegation had come to the conclusion that the refugee problem was to all intents and purposes solved. According to the *Report on the World Social Situation* (*ibid.*, p. 12), the number of refugees within the mandate of the High Commissioner remaining in camps in European countries was only 13,000, and their settlement would be completed early in 1962. The number of non-settled refugees living outside the camps had dropped to 67,000, and responsibility for assisting them rested mainly with the countries in which they were living.

22. As the number of refugees left was very small, her delegation was of opinion that there were no longer any grounds for keeping the Office of the High Commissioner in existence. The Office had originally been established on a temporary basis, for a relatively short period of time, but later its existence had been prolonged. The time had come to abolish the Office and indeed the post of High Commissioner itself, since the duties of both had been discharged.

23. Her delegation was obliged to refute certain statements in the High Commissioner's report about the so-called Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, which had been inspired by elements hostile to the People's Republic of China. Similar erroneous remarks appeared in the *Report on the World Social Situation*, although, there, it was admitted that in Hong Kong there was no clear-cut dividing line between refugees and migrants for economic reasons (*ibid.*, p. 13). The Government of Hong Kong estimated that its population had increased by about 1 million since 1949 owing to immigration, but had not attempted to determine what proportion were refugees.

24. That admission clearly showed that the terms used by the High Commissioner were inappropriate. It was impossible to describe all the people concerned as refugees, since most of them were merely migrants who had been free to move to and fro across the frontier between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China before the frontier had been closed. Further, the population of Hong Kong contained a large number of former members of the armed forces of Chiang Kai-Shek, in addition to spies and diversionists who had moved from Taiwan to carry out

subversive activities against the People's Republic of China. Such persons could not be classified as refugees; they should not be allowed to enjoy the rights of refugees, and their fate was no concern of the High Commissioner.

25. A month after the publication of the High Commissioner's report, news had come that tens of thousands of people had been obliged by the violence of the Portuguese colonialists in Angola to leave their country and seek refuge in neighbouring African countries. The Soviet delegation demanded that Portuguese repression in Angola should cease forthwith.

26. Mr. WADE (New Zealand) said that the New Zealand people and Government wholeheartedly supported the High Commissioner in the humanitarian task in which his Office was engaged.

27. With regard to World Refugee Year, his delegation was glad to learn that, apart from the increased resettlement opportunities provided, the total sum contributed or pledged from all sources over and above the sums normally raised each year was nearly \$75 million. Although New Zealand was a small country, its total response of \$1,221,000 from both government and private sources was, he understood, one of the largest per caput contributions.

28. The outstanding success of World Refugee Year had been widely welcomed as evidence that, given the necessary financial stimulus, final solutions could be found for the remaining European refugee problems, which were those primarily covered by the mandate of the High Commissioner. He was glad to note from the report that the necessary sums were available to complete the clearance of camps and also to assist refugees in becoming firmly settled once they had left camp.

29. As the work of camp clearance moved towards its conclusion, more attention was being focused on the problems of non-settled refugees living outside camps. In European countries, the total number of refugees in that category was large and had not greatly diminished since 1958. It was fortunate that, mainly as a result of favourable economic conditions in a number of European countries, many persons who retained the legal status of refugee had in fact found a living in the country of asylum and might be able to solve their problems without further international help. But there remained the particularly intractable problem of refugees living outside camps who had not been assimilated into the life of their country of residence, in many cases because of their age or because they were physically or socially handicapped. The report indicated that the proportion of handicapped refugees was increasing, and their needs should be high on the scale of priorities. An important step had been taken when the governments of countries of immigration throughout the world, including his own, had recognized the need to facilitate access for handicapped refugees, and it was a matter of satisfaction that progress was being made in rehabilitating and caring for such refugees in some of the countries of Europe where they resided. He joined the High Commissioner in hoping that the remaining problems of non-settled refugees living outside camps could, in the near future, be clearly defined in terms of

size, scope and financial requirements, and that a definite target and time-limit could be set for their removal.

30. His delegation had been particularly pleased to note that the High Commissioner had been able to reach an understanding with the League of Red Cross Societies on the relief programme for Algerian refugees in Morocco and Tunisia, and that there was no longer a risk that the joint operation of the League and the High Commissioner might be put in jeopardy.

31. Sir Samuel HOARE (United Kingdom) said that the report of the High Commissioner was an admirable account of what had been done, and what remained to be done, in solving the refugee problem. His delegation had no criticism to make of any section of the report; and, on the High Commissioner's work in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 1499 (XV), it agreed entirely with the comments of the representative of France.

32. He was proud to recall that World Refugee Year had originated from a suggestion made by two private individuals in the United Kingdom, one of whom had since received the Nansen award. The original proposal had at once received the wholehearted support of the United Kingdom Government, and of other governments and finally of the United Nations; and, as a result, it appeared that camp clearance would be completed by 1963, though — as the High Commissioner had stated in his report — many efforts would still be required.

33. The results of World Refugee Year were striking evidence of the manner in which an imaginative proposal could touch the hearts and minds of people throughout the world, and he could wish that some equally imaginative procedure could be devised to put an end once and for all to the whole problem of the refugees of the immediate post-war period. Camp clearance was only one of the objectives to be attained. It was essential also to find permanent solutions for refugees outside camps, many of whom were living in sub-standard dwellings and were handicapped in other ways.

34. He was glad to note that World Refugee Year had had a favourable effect on the policies and practices of governments in regard to the status accorded to refugees. Many regulations affecting refugees were less liberal than they needed to be, and their relaxation was not only advantageous to the refugees themselves, but lightened the High Commissioner's task of protection, and liberated energies which might be used for other purposes.

35. Recalling that his country had contributed more than a quarter of the total sum received by the High Commissioner under World Refugee Year, he expressed concern at the possibility that there might be some decline in normal contributions to the regular programme now that the World Refugee Year had come to an end. He hoped that assistance received by the High Commissioner from voluntary and governmental sources would be maintained at least at the existing level, so that the programme for the year could be completed.

36. The United Kingdom Government had promised to assist refugees from Algeria by contributing an amount equal to 10 per cent of all cash donations received for that purpose from other countries represented on the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, up

to a reasonable ceiling; and it hoped it would soon have the opportunity of honouring that promise.

37. As to the Soviet representative's remarks on refugees in Hong Kong, he agreed that in some cases there might be an element of doubt whether persons coming to Hong Kong from the Chinese mainland had come for economic betterment. Such cases also arose among persons classified as refugees in Europe. But as the territory of Hong Kong was so small, the influx of a million persons was not something which the Hong Kong Government could welcome or take lightly. It regarded the new arrivals as strangers within its gates whom it should not send back, and had made great efforts to provide them with housing and assist them in other ways. In the circumstances, he thought that for the great bulk of those people the term "refugee" was appropriate.

38. Mr. KLUTZNICK (United States of America), welcoming the newly appointed High Commissioner, said that it was hardly the time to consider winding up the activities of the High Commissioner's Office. All agreed that the winding up of those activities for the benefit of refugees constituted the desirable ultimate aim of the work. The High Commissioner's report, however, although denoting progress in that direction, gave proof that the refugee problem still persisted, as witness the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco, for whose assistance the United States had made a contribution of \$12 million.

39. The sustained attack on the problem of unsettled refugees in Europe was bearing fruit, due in no small measure to the excellent results of World Refugee Year. The United States Government, in addition to making a substantial financial contribution under the Year, had relaxed its immigration regulations for the benefit of tubercular and other handicapped refugees.

40. It was gratifying to note that the funds required for the completion of the camp clearance scheme were available and that the elimination of the problem of refugees in camps was at hand.

41. Resettlement, integration or voluntary repatriation did not solve all the problems of refugees, however. The United States Government therefore welcomed the increasing emphasis being placed by the High Commissioner's Office on the task of legal assistance. It was part of that task to encourage governments to maintain liberal policies on asylum and to give refugees the legal status necessary for their successful integration. The basic responsibility for refugees was borne by the asylum countries but, where the governments of those countries might need outside help, the High Commissioner had ample authority to consult with them concerning the problems raised.

42. The disruption caused by the Second World War had tended to focus attention on the problem of European refugees, but the international community was also alive to the reality of other refugee problems, as was shown by resolutions adopted by the General Assembly from 1957 onwards. In particular, the High Commissioner's "good offices" function, as laid down by resolutions 1388 (XIV) and 1499 (XV), was a useful international instrument to assist refugee groups that fell outside the competence of

the United Nations. Although they made no provision for material international assistance, those resolutions, by broadening the functions of the High Commissioner's Office, made the services of an experienced agency available to governments desiring to work in association for the solution of specific new refugee problems.

43. The refugee problem in general was fortunately declining in magnitude, but in some respects the task of the High Commissioner's Office had become more varied, difficult and demanding. That was particularly true of the continuing work of legal assistance, and might apply also to new refugee problems which might arise in the future; it was therefore good that the High Commissioner's Office should be available to facilitate international co-operation in respect of refugees, in the interest of social and humanitarian ends.

44. Mr. PETROV (Bulgaria) said that, as the Bulgarian delegation to the fifteenth session of the General Assembly had already had occasion to remark, and as the figures given in the High Commissioner's report seemed to indicate, the refugee problem had become less pressing. It had been stated that some 15,000 refugees had become

naturalized in their countries of residence during the year 1960, and that 2,500 refugees had been voluntarily repatriated. From the information supplied, it was apparent that the whole problem of the remaining unsettled refugees could be settled within twelve or eighteen months.

45. In the circumstances, his delegation was of opinion that there was no need to maintain the High Commissioner's Office. Much emphasis had been placed by certain delegations on the question of legal assistance, but the provision of that assistance could not justify the continued existence of such a large administration.

*The Council took note of the report prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/3506 and Corr.1 and Add.1), for transmission to the General Assembly at its sixteenth session.*

46. The PRESIDENT thanked the High Commissioner for his valuable report and extended to him the good wishes of the Council in the performance of his humanitarian duties.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.